

[Ross Sneyd, VPR News](#)

Two members of Vermont's congressional delegation were part of the chorus in Washington on Tuesday demanding changes in the oil industry in the wake of the Gulf Coast spill.

VPR's Ross Sneyd has more.

Congressman Peter Welch has been quite active in trying to go after BP and force it to put up money now to cover costs associated with the massive spill.

Welch repeated that call again as oil industry executives appeared before the House Energy Committee, where he's a member.

"Responsible companies pay their obligations, then they pay dividends. BP has affirmed its intention to make good on its obligations. Now we ask that BP take financial steps consistent with its assurances."

Welch has demanded that BP suspend its dividend payment to shareholders. He and others in Washington want that money dedicated to stopping the leaking, cleaning up the oil, and paying claims for damages.

Welch also wants the oil industry to give up some of the tax incentives they enjoy.

He asked Chevron CEO John Watson whether his company would be willing to forego assistance.

"I support continuing it. And I don't consider it a subsidy. I consider it similar to many other provisions in the tax code that dictate the timing of the deduction."

"Well, I have one question. I believe in tax incentives. But I question whether they should go to mature industries and industries that are profitable."

Welch says he'd rather redirect the incentives to renewable energy companies that don't already enjoy the success of the oil companies.

On the Senate side of the Capitol, Bernie Sanders is pursuing a similar strategy. He offered an amendment to take away some of the industry's tax incentives.

"This amendment simply repeals over \$35 billion in tax breaks to the oil and gas industry, all of which were recommended for elimination in President Obama's fiscal year 2011 budget, which the Joint Committee on Taxation has estimated would raise over \$35 billion in a 10-year period."

Sanders would use \$10 billion of that to help fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. He'd use the rest to reduce the deficit.

For VPR News, I'm Ross Sneyd.